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LABOURS OF HERCULES.

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THE
LABOURS
OF
HERCULES.

BY
"PUNCH."

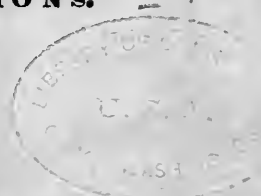
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PUNCH'S

LABOURS OF HERCULES.

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION.

HOW HERCULES WAS SET TO WORK.

TRUISMS are superfluous,—though this assertion is a truism: it is needless, therefore, to remind the reader that we are now living in the Millennium. Oppression is unheard of, Injustice unknown,—as for Poverty, we never mention it. Peace and Plenty everywhere prevail; and Charity reigns paramount throughout the world.

There was, however, once a time, when men lied, cheated, tyrannized, cut each other's throats, and picked one another's pockets; when one class surfeited and another starved; when Dives in his mansion, arrayed in purple and fine linen, stuffed himself into a monstrosity, and Lazarus in the workhouse, in pauper uniform, and on the "coarser kind of food," was famished into a skeleton. To have attained, therefore, to its present state of blessedness, the world must have undergone a glorious reformation. How came this about? Through HERCULES, who wrought a second series of labours for the express purpose.

Jupiter, from his arm-chair in sublimest ether, looking down on the navigable ocean and on the earth, spread like Mr. Wyld's atlas beneath him, beheld rascality pervading land and sea. We say sea, advisedly, for there were nautical naughtiness as well as land villainies in those days, and it was impossible even for the British tar to touch pitch and not be defiled. All this Jupiter seeing, he flew for the ten-millionth time into a great fury, and indignantly grasped his thunder. But recollecting how often he had tried that remedy without effect, and considering that when you fire on a mob it is a chance whom you hit and whom you miss, he put it down again and scratched his head. "What is to be done with those fellows!" said Jupiter.

“Minerva, you have a head of your own,—how shall I put them to rights?”

The blue-eyed goddess assumed an attitude of reflection, and after a few moments' thought, touched her alabaster forehead, with the ivory tip of her forefinger, and cried, “I have it. Father of the gods and men, send your son Hercules among them with his club. He will soon settle their affairs.”

“Hercules with his club!” exclaimed Jupiter. “I don't see, daughter, what he is to do with that. He might kill monsters with it; but how is he to redress wrongs?”

“Wrongs,” answered the goddess, “are monsters. There are giant wrongs upon earth. Hercules shall slay the giants with his club. With the same instrument, too, he shall beat sense and reason into the heads of the sons of men.”

Jupiter flung up his crown into the air and caught it, danced thrice round the celestial hall, “*oscula libavit natae*,” as Virgil hath it,—in plain English, kissed his daughter, and called out for Hercules at the top of his lungs. “Here you are, governor!” cried the deep-toned voice of the deified hero; “any thing in my way? *Toujours pret*, you know.”

“Don't talk French, boy,” said Jupiter; “the language is not heroic. What I want you to do, is just to step down to that ball of earth there, and put yonder disorderly rabble to rights with your Malacca. Minerva says you can do it. Can you?”

“Why you are omniscient, sire,” answered Hercules; “of course you know best.”

“Yes, yes,” said Jupiter, with a slight cough, “I merely made the inquiry conventionally. But never mind that. Verbosity is inadmissible when delays are dangerous. So, without more ceremony, oblige me, and be off about your business. Amputate your cane.”

“If I do that, thought Hercules, how am I to make use of it?” He kept however this reflection to himself, and with all alacrity complied with the request of his father.

He alighted, after a very pleasant journey through the azure deep of air, upon Primrose-hill. “It strikes me,” observed the demigod, as he was preparing himself for his adventures, “that I am remarkably like Don Quixote—only a little stouter.”

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST LABOUR.—HOW HERCULES SLEW THE RED LION,
FELLOW TO AND FELLER THAN THE LION OF NEMÆA.

THE first monster that Hercules attacked was a formidable and ferocious lion, to which the Nemæan Lion—to say nothing of the Lion Wallace—was a mere kitten. This lion was not a four-legged lion,—indeed he was soon not a legged lion at all, for Hercules left him not a leg to stand upon. He was a biped brute;—but such a brute! He had a scarlet coat, with a sort of yellow fringe upon each shoulder; and he wore, in place of a mane, a stiff black collar about his neck. His head was surmounted by a kidney-shaped, comb-like excrescence of black felt, from which sprung great plumes, as of feathers, white and red. His dexter fore-paw, or hand, was armed with a weapon of iron ever dripping with purple gore. His eyes flashed lightning, and he breathed out fire and smoke and red-hot cannon balls. He strode among crushed and mangled carcasses, through burning cities and over blood-bedabbled decks, and he trampled on the dying and the dead. Around him, were yelling and blasphemy, shouts of rage and screams for mercy. Legions of his cubs, ferocious as himself, followed him; they hauled delicate and tender women by the hair over flinty streets; tore little children to pieces, and cleft feeble old men to the chine. He had desolated Earth and scandalized Heaven for ages: he was a murderer from the beginning, and his name was War.

Men committed idolatry to this Lion; they sung hymns to his praise and glory, and they suspended trophies in his honour in their Houses of Prayer. They glorified his very cubs; they dressed them out in fine clothes to make them look handsome, and they called them grand names;—Captains, Colonels, Generals, and Field Marshals; and some they worshipped under the name of Lords. The ladies smoothed them down, and patted them on the back, and smiled upon them, and toyed with them, and made much of them, to the no small envy of their own peaceable admirers. They would rush to windows to see a herd of them go by, strutting, prancing, and looking fierce, to t

sound of trumpet and drum, and they would kiss their hands to them from balconies and high places. In short, they aided, abetted, and comforted them to the very utmost of their power.

These whelps of the Red Lion would sometimes march under the command of a leader to a temple or place of worship, where it was often proclaimed in their presence that all they who took the sword should perish by the sword; but their brute natures prevented them from understanding what they heard; moreover, they were strictly prohibited from even attempting to think, and had any one of them acted on the doctrine in question, he would have been destroyed by the rest without mercy.

In order to check the slightest tendency in their minds towards reflection, they were never allowed to move except to noisy and boisterous music, which kept them in a state of mental intoxication highly antagonistic to rationality. This was very expedient; for even a brute, if it came to think and meditate on the sensations accompanying the having its entrails torn out, or its limbs crushed into a jelly, and on the commodiousness of a wooden leg, would hardly be inclined to put itself in the way of such pleasantnesses for thirteence a day, even though it should be dressed up and tricked out, and called a fine fellow into the bargain.

To keep the cubs in order was not always easy; and it was oftentimes necessary, even for a trifling misdemeanor, to tie one of them up to a stake and whip the hide off the creature's bones, for the edification of all the rest and the amusement of the casual looker-on.

Now that these animals and their sire must have been a great nuisance, the abatement of which would be no small boon to society, is very obvious and apparent. Their own existence being involved in that of their parent, to destroy the old Red Lion was to annihilate his progeny. What Hercules had to do, therefore, was to knock War on the head. In the case of the Nemæan lion, he did this at once; but in the present instance, he adopted a more circuitous course. He had a harder job to do this time.

He found that the lion, War, was fed and maintained upon certain errors and prejudices, which he would previously have to knock out of people's heads; this, therefore, he first set to work to accomplish.

With his omnipotent Club, which the reader must know was a moral and intellectual Club, (a Punch-Club, in fact,) he beat and drove out of the heads of the nations the fallacy that there was any thing fine in the nature of this beast. He took the *l* out of the glory of War, and showed them that it should rightly be called gory. He divested the evil of the magnitude which gave it sublimity in pigmy eyes; he pummelled it into a small thing, and then men found it wilful murder, and saw that it was bad.

By dint of the *argumentum baculinum*—to wit, ridicule, he convinced mankind, and womankind too, that the epaulette and the shoulder-knot were cousins-german, and uniforms became in their sight as liveries. He took a child's drum and beat it; and he squeaked through a penny trumpet about the streets, till at last people laughed at the Coldstream band.

He corked his eyebrows and stuck moustaches on his upper lip, and dressed himself up in a cocked hat and a scarlet coat like the monkey of an Italian organ-boy, and so walked up and down Regent Street with the air of Lord Bateman, (no policeman daring to take him up;) and wherever he went, he cocked his chin and swore oaths. The boys followed him at first, but they soon took to following the Commander-in-chief also.

When he found himself in the company of sensitive females, he would describe the processes of racking, breaking on the wheel, impalement, burning alive, and other similar modes of pleurably exciting the nervous system, which, as history informs us, were formerly in vogue, until the sweet creatures grew sick, and pale, and faint, with horror and disgust. And then he hammered into their soft heads the perception that bayonets, shots, shells and rockets, were precisely similar in their operation to the tools of the common hangman.

He expatiated in all companies on the beauty of the precept, "Love your enemies," (which we do not observe now only because we have no enemies to love;) explained the compatibility of its observance with cutting their throats, ripping up their stomachs and dashing out their brains; and cited the example of a drunken Irishman at Dónnybrook Fair, to show how reasonable and sensible such conduct was.

He described the march of an invading army, and the

taking of a town by storm; and drew a very pretty and pleasing picture of the blazing corn-fields and rafters, and the massacred inhabitants. He gave graphic delineations of all the writhings and agonies resulting from the operation of cold steel, lead and fire, upon the human body; and would conclude a homily upon this subject by a grave proposal for the restoration of the worship of Moloch.

At last men's eyes were opened, and even the French perceived War to be a mistake, and laughed at the humbug of "Glory." The lion was now a poor, weak, drivelling, impotent savage, and Hercules quietly choked him.

CHAPTER II.

THE SECOND LABOUR.—HOW HERCULES DESTROYED A CERTAIN TERRIBLE HYDRA.

EVERY schoolboy knows that Hercules, before he went to Heaven, smote and slew a frightful monster, denominated the Lernæan Hydra. This Hydra was an enormous reptile of a species now happily extinct. the researches of the most diligent naturalists have as yet failed to discover an individual of the serpent or of the lizard tribes rejoicing in the possession of more than a single head, though perhaps a dicephalous alligator may be found one of these days in Kentucky. But the Hydra, according to the most moderate computation, had seven heads; while another account gives it fifty; and a third, just as likely to be correct as either of the other two, a hundred. On one of these heads being cut off, two more sprang up in its place; and very likely it was from suffering frequent decapitation at the hands of heroes, that the creature, endowed with seven heads to begin with, came to have a hundred in the end. The above facts, and the circumstance that the Lernæan Hydra was a very poisonous and rapacious vermin, and as such had made itself highly obnoxious to the neighbourhood, are all that we know about its natural history. We read, however, that it was the offspring of one Echidna, a she-dragon or griffin, by Typhon, who was the Evil Principle. This is an import-

ant point, and the reader, it is hoped, will duly bear it in mind.

Now, the Lernæan Hydra, it would seem, had a sort of soul, which of course our hero was unable to smash. This soul underwent a long series of transmigrations, inhabiting successively the bodies of various wolves, hyænas, sharks, crocodiles, rattle-snakes and boa-constrictors, till at last it again animated a frame like its original tenement, which, ampler details having been handed down to us concerning it, we are enabled more fully to describe.

This modern Hydra was a gigantic monster, like unto a winged serpent as to its body, and having large and powerful claws or talons, which, whenever they once got prey into their clutches, were never known to let it go. It had heads almost innumerable, which were continually increasing from day to day. These heads were as the heads of men, and upon them were gray wigs which resembled wigs of horse-hair. Of the wigs, some were short and close-cropped, with a few stiff rolls of curls at their sides and back, wherefrom also depended certain tails which were called pig-tails; others were long and flowing, with great luxuriant curls like those which ascend from the bowl of a tobacco-pipe. In the mouth of each head were fangs as of adders, and likewise double tongues. These tongues possessed the faculty of speech, which they employed after the manner of the first speaking serpent on record, namely, to cajole and deceive, which objects they accomplished by two arts now lost to the world, but whose revival is scarcely to be wished for:—Sophistry and Humbug. By Sophistry they enlisted the intellect, by Humbug the passions, of their hearers against the truth. The said tongues, moreover, were endowed with another power, which they would very frequently exercise,—that of overhearing, confounding and bullying; however, being very glib and oily, they were quite able to flatter and speak fair on occasion.

Some of the tongues of this Hydra possessed the privilege of slaying with a word. The heads which they resided in were those with the huge curly wigs; and when they were about to be thus fatally employed, the big wig was surmounted by a cap of black velvet, very awful to behold.

Among the Hydra's heads there were not a few which

had no wigs at all; their faces were as the faces of foxes, very cunning-looking and sly. By contemporaneous writers they are said to have had a six-and-eightpenny expression of countenance, a phrase the meaning of which is, in the present day, somewhat obscure.

The evil and mischief which this monster had occasioned in his time are almost incredible. His worst quality was, that he was ever a willing tool in the hands of any one who would feed and stuff him, and enable him to batten on the garbage of Mammon. He would allow himself to be hounded on anybody, no matter whom, for a consideration. If a rich man wanted to dispossess a poor one of his little all, there was this Hydra ever to be hired for a golden bribe, to be let loose, barking with one, two, or more mouths, according to the reward, at the needy wretch, till at last it drove him off his premises. Was there a mercenary trull who had inveigled some superannuated dotard into a promise of marriage? the Hydra was at her service to invoke, by raving, canting, and lying, a mulct of some thousand guineas on the head of the old man for non-fulfilment of the disgusting compact. Was a widow or an orphan to be defrauded of their rights? the Hydra had lynx-like eyes at the command of the wealthy oppressor to find out flaws in deeds and settlements, whereby to reduce the poor creatures to beggary. Was a villain, who had cut his father's throat, to be turned loose on society? the Hydra only needed to be paid to do the job, by discovering that the criminal had been accused by a name of four letters, whereas it ought to have been spelt with five. Nor were there wanting to the Hydra heads that would for a trifle call Heaven to attest their belief in the prisoner's innocence; they well knowing him to be guilty all the while. There was one particular den which was the favourite haunt of this Hydra, where it was wont to display the most ill-favoured and villanous of all the heads it bore: these heads were remarkable for being more particularly foul-mouthed, especially towards each other, than any of the rest. This den bore the name of Old Bailey.

But the Hydra had, been guilty of deeper and more sanguinary enormities than the above. Not only had it broken innumerable hearts, and driven countless victims raving mad; but it had strangled, decapitated, ripped up,

burnt, broken alive, and destroyed by other lingering torments, myriads of unfortunate persons, some altogether innocent, and all, except some few, more sinned against than sinning.

The name of this Hydra was "The Law;" it was the offspring of Necessity, by Wickedness.

Here now was a monster to be exterminated with all speed; but how? Hercules might have battered at its several heads to all eternity; for, as in the case of its prototype, as fast as one was knocked off, others, forthwith, shot up, as if by magic, to replace it. He knew, moreover, that the populace had, at different times, arisen and trampled this Hydra in the dust; but after having been to all appearance destroyed and annihilated, its disjointed limbs would reunite, and it would shortly be resuscitated in more than its former might. He further perceived, that so long as crime existed, it was a necessary evil.

So Hercules determined to use his club as a Reform Club—though not the Club in Pall-Mall—to see if, in a social sense, he could not beat the knave out of doors. But first he launched a few arrows from his unerring bow at the monster, whereby he crippled and enfeebled it, preparatory to knocking it on the heads. These arrows were anointed with gall, which was of a black, inky nature, and the wounds which they made stung and rankled exceedingly. And the unction was in the form of written characters, and those characters made words, and those words sentences, wherein was the sting of the arrows.

Various things too numerous to recite were inscribed on the arrows of Hercules. Among them it was written that he who argued and employed oratory, being hired, for the purpose of wilful deception, was a paid liar. That the willing tool of the swindler and the cheat was a scoundrel. That the person protracting by technical artifice a lawsuit respecting property, in order that he himself might derive the larger pickings from the same, was a legal pickpocket. That the abettor of a murderer, whether wearing a wig and gown, or a smock-frock and ankle-jacks, was an accessory after the fact. The arrows thus anointed were said to carry "home truths," and they did marvellous execution on the body of the Hydra.

Some arrows bore legends of a seemingly opposite import. As for instance, "Blessed is the hireling of the

oppressor of the poor." "To perplex and bother a witness, with the view of causing him to swear to an untruth, is an honest thing." "It is very right and proper knowingly to garble statements and misrepresent facts, for so much." It was also set down upon these arrows, that under the protection of Court to insinuate falsehoods; known to be such, against the character and motives of a plaintiff or defendant, was extremely brave and gentleman-like. That it was noble and high-minded to employ ridicule against right, and to excite vulgar prejudices in behalf of wrong. Some of these sentences were of a slightly playful character, as that the silk gown of the venal pleader was by no manner of means a wrap-rascal; the point of the arrows thus armed were brighter and more sparkling than the rest; and these weapons had a tickling, irritating property, which occasioned much smarting to the reptile. A few of them were aimed at the more sensitive part of certain dull persons on whom the Hydra depended for its subsistence; but who by the tickling of the shafts were piqued and aroused into reflection. These arrows insinuated how sensible and creditable it was to be beguiled into enthusiasm against Justice, by being addressed as a "British jury," as "Men, parents, husbands, Englishmen," and so forth, by a crafty, fee-seeking, heartless knave; who all the while held the said British jury, and the men, parents, husbands, and Englishmen aforesaid, in profound and sovereign contempt. Other similar hints, equally delectable and flattering, they likewise bore, and by dint of them that worthy personage, Mr. John Bull, was edified to an extent that was surprising.

A due number of volleys of arrows having been discharged by Hercules, the Hydra was observed to grow very sick and faint, and to pine exceedingly for lack of food, which people had begun to take all possible care to take out of its way. It was obviously in bad case; and it was evident that a very little would suffice to settle its business.

Still, however, the demigod left it alone, and proceeded with his mighty club, and his sharp arrows, to demolish rascality in all its different varieties; his achievements forming other adventures which yet remain to be recorded. Villany at last was eradicated from the earth; and the conqueror now advanced to give his enfeebled enemy, the

Hydra, the finishing and fatal blow. It was needless: the monster had been starved to death; for roguery is the food of law. So Hercules had nothing to do but to tuck the creature up on his club, and to cut a caper of triumph before the people; even after the fashion of Mr. PUNCH, when he has accomplished his final victory over the enemy of man.

CHAPTER III.

THE THIRD LABOUR.—HOW HERCULES CAPTURED THE BUCK OF THE BRAZEN COUNTENANCE.

It is not to be supposed that Hercules could have gone on choking lions, crushing reptiles, and exterminating monsters in general, without attracting some attention.

The public, in general, however, contrary to their accustomed behaviour, to those who sought their good, whom they were wont to pelt, and hang, and poison, and persecute, unanimously called our hero a fine fellow. "Hercules for ever!" was chalked, painted, and printed up, on every dead wall and barrier. His more ardent admirers wanted to get him into Parliament, and several flags inscribed "Vote for Hercules!" were displayed from divers windows. All public-houses entitled the "Pillars of Hercules" began to be much frequented: and at some of these, mystic games, called *σπίττες*, were instituted in his honour. Each *σπίττε* was fashioned in the shape of a human head, which bore a resemblance to some one or other well-known representative of a particular class of monsters, which, it was hoped, he would speedily overthrow.

One day a procession headed by the Lord Mayor of London, and including all the members of the Corporation, together with a large number of other tradesmen, craftsmen, and mechanics, waited with much form and ceremony on the hero. Hercules received them with great dignity, and on their spokesman intimating that he had something to say, graciously desired him to say on. Then the Lord Mayor pulled a paper out of his pocket, and putting his spectacles on his nose, gave a short cough, and read to the effect following:—

"May it please your Divinity,

"Whereas your mightiness in times past, as we are credibly informed by our reverend chaplain, and divers others, learned men and great clerks, was graciously pleased to pursue, entrap, and catch, a certain STAG, of incredible swiftness, golden horns, and brazen feet, and to deliver the same, firmly bound and secured, into the custody of your mightiness's brother Eurystheus: which STAG did crop, despoil, and lay waste the pastures and meadows of CEnoe, to the no small damage and detriment of the shepherds and graziers of that region and the neighbourhood. And whereas, now, a certain BUCK, or Male-deer, also with horns (to our cost) richly gilt, and though not having feet of brass, yet being of a brazen face; moreover exceedingly swift, so that no man may catch him, and withal of extreme subtlety, doth, in like manner, nibble, bite, and devour, the herbage of a certain field to us appertaining, commonly called the Field of Commerce: We, the undersigned, the Lord Mayor, Corporation, Merchants, Bankers, Tradesman, and others of the City of London, in the County of Middlesex, do humbly beg, entreat, and implore, your mightiness, that you would graciously vouchsafe also to pursue, catch, and entrap the said BUCK, and deliver the same, likewise firmly bound and secured, into the hands and custody of our Sheriffs of London and Middlesex; to be by them dealt with according to the law in such case made and provided. And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray."

Then followed a host of signatures.

Hercules, having with much gravity and condescension, patiently listened to the above oration, politely requested his lordship to be more explicit; protesting that he could not, for the life and soul of him, comprehend what he had been driving at. Whereupon, the Lord Mayor being now out of breath, his clerk proceeded in terms rather less enigmatical to explain the object of the petition.

He informed Hercules that the BUCK complained of was a human BUCK, the type or pattern of a genus, and that he derived his name from his outward man, which was what was commonly denominated a "fashionable exterior," that is, the exterior of a BUCK. That the brazenness of his face was a metaphorical expression signifying its unchanging nature, and indicating singular cool-

ness and imperturbability of mind. That the gold on his horns represented booty and pillage, and was intended to distinguish him from certain other Bucks whose horns were said to be green. That his nibbling and biting in the Field of Commerce meant divers depredations, which, by craft and stratagem, he perpetrated on the goods, chattels, and substance of commercial men. And that his great swiftness of foot related to a remarkable facility of absconding, by means of which, after playing off one of his tricks, he would transfer himself in less than no time to France or America, and that he had a great many disguises, military, naval, and foreign: and thus ended his speech.

The hero affected for a few moments to be reading over the signatures. He was only thinking. Presently, he rose, and having glanced his penetrating eye over the deputation, delivered himself as follows:

“My Lord Mayor and Gentlemen,

“I shall have much pleasure in acceding (substantially) to your request, and in doing my best to settle the hash—that is to say, the venison—of this very troublesome and mischievous Buck. You will please, however, to allow me to manage this matter my own way. As to consigning him to the custody of your Sheriffs of London and Middlesex, I cannot undertake to do that, because it strikes me forcibly that the offices of those gentlemen will very shortly be sinecures, in which case I know you too well to suppose that you will continue them; so that you may expect, before any long time shall have elapsed, to have no Sheriffs at all.”

Here the members of the deputation generally exchanged blank looks, and the visages of the civic dignitaries—some of whom gave audible grunts of dissatisfaction—became visibly inflamed, which Hercules, not marking, continued—

“Now, gentlemen, before I take any measures for the capture of this Buck, I must insist upon a little exertion on your own parts with a view to protect this Field of Commerce, as you call it, from his depredations. I am not going to waste my immortal breath in chasing him for some twelve months, perhaps to no manner of purpose, and with the certainty of having to recommence my pursuit of some other individual of his tribe equally obnoxious with himself at the end of it. You must famish and de-

bilitate him, gentlemen; him and all his kin, and then I will see what I can do for you. And now, attend. How is it, I ask, that this BUCK,—or, as I may as well call him by his real name, SWINDLER, is enabled to prey upon you? Why—you addle-brained, pudding-pated, turtle-witted noodles—because you are stupid enough to let him. How is it that you do not recognise him the instant you see him? Why—and you have been told this before—because your brains are in your breeches' pockets. Do you suppose that every rogue has not his name written in his countenance for those who can read? It repels you from his eye—it disgusts you in his smirk—it grates upon your ear in his very voice. I am a demigod, but with half my wit—which is that of a mere man, I could detect a swindler instantly. For instance, there," (here Hercules rose and pointed with his fore-finger to an individual present,) "there is a swindler! Do you not see the snake, the vulture, and the fox branded in his every lineament? Do you not, I say?"

Hercules paused. Every eye was directed toward the object thus denounced. He was a Jew bill-discounter. The creature looked as if blasted by a thunderbolt. His eyes were fixed and wide open, his face like whitewash, and his grinning lips livid as a mulberry. His knees knocked together, and his whole frame shook like a jelly in convulsions.

"Vanish, scoundrel!" thundered the hero. The caitiff lost no time in obeying; and hastening frantically into the street, ran his head against a lamp-post. He was taken up, labouring under concussion of the brain, and having been bled, physicked, and blistered accordingly, turned Christian on recovery, and gave away all he had to a hospital.

"There!" resumed Hercules, "I was right, you see. Now all you have to do to become just as good a physiognomist as I am, is just to devote a little of that time which you lay out upon your ledgers and day-books to looking about you, studying mankind, and cultivating those Mammon-muddled, dross-defiled, twopenny-halfpenny intellects of yours. And, now, get out with you!" So saying, Hercules descended from his throne, and catching up his footstool, flung it at their heads, which he afterwards belaboured with his club to such purpose, that they speedily beat their

retreat. Rubbing their pates, they made the best of their way home, and when they got there, took care to act upon his suggestions.

The result was, that the race of swindlers in the course of a few months became quite extinct,—all except one. He had been the great Buck swindler of his day, but he was now become a mere starveling and tatterdemalion. Hercules, in taking a walk one day, caught sight of him through a dusty window, dining at a wretched eating-house in the New Cut. The hero watched his opportunity; and as the sorry wretch, the shadow of his former self, was “bolting,” as Hercules foresaw that he would, without having discharged his reckoning, he seized him, almost unresisted, by the collar. He would not commit him to a jail, well knowing that he would go out a greater rogue than he went in; and he considered the workhouse too bad even for a swindler. So having given him a wholesome taste of his emendatory club, he put a few guineas in his pocket and shipped him off to Australia.

CHAPTER IV.

LABOUR FOURTH.—HOW HERCULES DESTROYED A GREAT BOAR.

HERCULES, in putting down war, so far put down murder. But murder is multiform. Not to talk of murdering Hamlet, Othello, and Macbeth, or murdering characters in another sense of the term, which being metaphorical murders, break no bones; there are, or rather there were, anteriorly to this happy era, several varieties of downright, literal, deadly murder. Men, women, and children, were worked to death in mines and factories. Wretches were starved in prisons. And the public was poisoned, as will presently be shown, by the wholesale.

The old world was infested with certain evils called diseases. We know, though of course no one ever thinks of trying the experiment, what would happen to one of us who should think proper to put his hand in the fire. For we read, in a certain book intended for the instruction of children, that “*ignis*,” fire, “*urit*,” burns. But, fortu-

nately, we are also further aware that some things are good to eat and others not, and of those which are good; that it is right to take only a limited quantity, otherwise that certain consequences, not essentially in any way differing from the burning of one's fingers, must, of necessity, ensue. So that no individual now dreams of eating turtle, venison, beef, mutton, and vegetables for six; or drinking champagne, port, sherry, or brandy-and-water for ten, as, sooth to say, was commonly done in times of yore. Nor does anybody otherwise break the laws of health; consequently nobody is ill. Diseases were susceptible of relief, and those whose business it was to afford it were called physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries. The ruins of the Hall of the latter, and of the Colleges of the two former, were still standing within the memory of man.

The practice of these men consisted, that is to say, it ought to have consisted, in directing their patients what to eat and drink, and how to live; and withal in giving and applying to them peculiar substances called medicines and remedies. This latter part of their business was the least and most insignificant portion of it; but our ancestors, with all respect to their memory, were such boobies as to suppose it the principal. They fancied that every disease had an appropriate cure in the shape of some drug or other, which when they became ill, they had nothing to do but to drink, swallow, or use. This mistake of theirs gave origin to another class of practitioners.

The physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries lived by the exercise of their calling, that is to say, they were paid (sometimes) by the persons whom they attended. They were obliged to be at much expense and trouble in educating and qualifying themselves for their duties; whereas the other class was under no obligation of the sort. Its members had only to invent some substance or compound, and to pay a certain sum which secured the monopoly of it to themselves, in order to go and sell it wherever, and to what amount, they pleased. These persons were denominated QUACKS.

Our revered ancestors were distinguished by a remarkable faculty,—a singular width of swallow. This will perhaps have been inferred from what has been said above of their voracity; but the swallow here intended was a mental or moral swallow, a capacity of gulping assertions

Of this, the Quacks took great advantage. A lie is now a moral monster, a thing we never hear: we only know what it is from History. In the days, however, whereof we write, lies were "as plenty as blackberries;" or rather, to use what in this delightful age is an apter simile, as abundant as pineapples. Well; these Quacks did lie enormously. You could not take up a newspaper or magazine that was not crammed with their falsehoods. Hardly could you pass a wall which did not display them; hardly run your nose against a post without their offending it. They stared you brazenly in the face in the broad ways, they sneaked into your notice in every corner. One Quack professed by his infallible specific to cure all diseases; another modestly restricted its efficacy, which, however, he vowed was unerring; to one. Each pressed Styleses and Nokeses, in attestation of his therapeutic miracles, into his service by scores: and at last it became a well-known fact that whoever could afford to pay sufficiently for the effectual dissemination of his lies, was sure to be repaid for his outlay by the realization of a fortune. For our good progenitors gorged these bounces with avidity, to the infinite detriment and dissatisfaction of the regular professors of physic; and moreover, to the slaughter of whole multitudes, which constituted the species of murder above adverted to.

Accordingly, the medical men went to Hercules, to complain to him of the ravages of quackery, which they represented as a terrible bore.

Hercules, recollecting his former adventure with the Erymanthian boar, was inquiring about the length of the monster's tusks, when they undeceived him by informing him that they meant a grievance.

Whereupon, the hero read them a short but interesting lecture, which he recommended their head man to retail at the next conversazione at the College of Physicians. He expounded unto them the real nature of disease, with the proper principles of treating it, which they pretending that they knew already, the hero asked them why, (and be blistered to them!) they had kept the people in ignorance. They had allowed the public to remain fools, and how could they complain if it became the prey of knavery? Until they purged their own body of quackery, he would see himself at Erebus before he would stir his stumps, or

his club either, to afford them the slightest assistance. With this, he frowned, and shook his said club at them in so threatening and awful a manner that they all went down upon their knees and humbly promised to mind what he had told them; after which, they slunk out of his presence much sadder and wiser men than they were when they came into it.

In due time, Hercules set to work to extirpate the evil. His first proceeding was to belabour soundly with his club the unprincipled legislature of the country, which for a consideration protected the Quack in the monopoly of his poisonous rubbish. He also distributed an adequate amount of drubbing among the public generally, insomuch, that in spite of the density of their skulls he quickly caused the light of reason to dance before their eyes, even as, when a heavy singlestick alighteth on the crown of a rustic, sparks and balls as of fire do glimmer and flash athwart his retina. And herein he was no respecter of persons, but did as vigorously and unsparingly assault divers Lords spiritual and temporal, county members of Parliament, worshipful aldermen, and respectable burgesses, as the most humble workmen and mechanics. Nay, as the latter, many of them, had been better taught at their various institutes than to put faith in Quacks, he found even more thumping required at his hands among what were then called the superior classes of society. Indeed, some of those who wanted the hardest hitting, were certain ladies of quality, including a large proportion of superannuated Countesses, who had been stupid enough to allow their names to be appended to certificates recommendatory of the ear-trumpet of this Quack, the spectacles of that, and the eye-snuff or stomach-pills of the other.

Nor did Hercules forget the proprietors of various noted journals, who let out the columns of their papers for Quacks to publish their lies in them,—but in truth, he dressed and curried them soundly, till they ceased to be the abettors of homicidal humbug.

The specific of the Quack now rapidly became a drug in the market. Whole warehouses were filled with elixirs, carminatives, electuaries, balsams, and real blessings to mothers, large quantities of which were shot on waste lands as rubbish, while some were converted to agricultural purposes. It was found, however, that the vegetable pills

and syrups which, it had been hoped, would form useful manure, proved, in consequence of not being vegetable matter at all, extremely detrimental to the soil. However, certain tons of powders, which were principally composed of bone-dust, were used with great benefit in some districts.

In fine, the occupation of the Quack, thanks to the club of Hercules, was very soon gone; and the only inconvenience which resulted was a certain increase of population. It was remedied by emigration to Australia.

As Hercules, when he went to destroy the Erymanthian boar, destroyed likewise the Centaurs, so, in putting down the bore of quackery, he overthrew a sect or gang of persons of whom the said Centaurs were in some measure typical. For we are informed that the Centaurs were a species of monsters, half men and half horse. Now the persons alluded to were a sort of Quacks, half-rational creatures and half-jackass, of whom some were termed Homœopathists, others Hydropathists, while there likewise belonged unto them several of the Mesmerists and Phrenologists. All were comprehensible under the generic term pseudosopher.

One remarkable circumstance attendant on the destruction of quackery, was an extreme attenuation of the Faculty, which included within itself a very large number of virtual Quacks. But, however, as a great and corresponding decline had taken place in the sum of diseases, there remained quite as many medical practitioners as were wanted, until mankind gradually arrived at their present state of enlightenment with respect to physiology; and at length diseases and doctors became extinct together.

CHAPTER V.

LABOUR FIFTH.—HOW HERCULES CLEANSED THE AUGEAN STABLES OF ENGLAND.

OXFORD Street has its "Pantheon;" Regent Street its "Circus;" and a club-house in Pall Mall is called the "Athenæum." In addition to these classicalities of London, there were formerly THE AUGEAN STABLES.

The original Augean Stables were tenements appertaining to one Augeas, king of Elis, a country of Peloponnesus. They had been occupied for many years by about three thousand head of live-stock, consisting of goats and oxen, and during all that time had never once been cleaned out; so that, although externally they bore the appearance of stables, their interior arrangements were rather like those of a pig-sty, and one of a particularly bad style. Perhaps, however, as there were no pigs in them, we had better say that they were a sort of ill-regulated cow-houses; but whether pig-sties, cow-houses, or stables, they were extremely insalubrious and unpleasant, and ought to have been indicted for a nuisance. Hercules, during his mortal career, performed the astonishing feat of cleansing and dulcifying these odoriferous out-houses in one day, which master-piece of scavengery he accomplished by the simple process of turning the course of the river Alpheus through them. Divested, by this means, of their delicate superfluities, they were fit, with a little clean straw, for the accommodation of a racing stud; though perhaps they would first have required a little rose water.

The English Augean Stables, which were in existence so lately as the year 1843, were situated in various parts of London. Some were called Offices; others, Courts; but the principal were denominated Houses. These last stood on the Middlesex side of the Thames contiguous to Westminster Bridge. Their outside was really very like that of common stables; the reason of which was, that they had been built up in a great hurry for temporary use,—the old buildings having been recently burnt down. What may seem singular, that accident had not in the slightest degree ameliorated the state of the interior from

which they had derived their appellation. But the filth in them was moral filth, which is incombustible by material fire.

The whooping, shouting, yelling, hooting, groaning, and other uncouth and zoological noises which were occasionally made in these stables, might have induced the hearer, if out of sight of what was going on within, to suppose that they were really what they seemed to be,—at least that they were mews, or pens, or menageries, where wild beasts and other animals were confined. Among these sounds there was a very common one which much resembled braying; nor when, upon being more distinctly listened to, it was found to be articulate, did the similitude disappear.

However, the occupants of these edifices were really human beings; though not a few, in the qualities of their intellect, partook strongly of the asiine nature; and it was remarked in a celebrated newspaper of the day, that any allusion made to the thistle-munching quadrupeds of the long ears was certain to excite a sort of sympathetic cachinnation in the assembly held therein. Several, from their connection with agriculture, and also from their tastes, habits, and ideas, might figuratively have been termed oxen; but the only bulls in the Augean Stables were Irish, or oral bulls, and these were tolerably numerous. Goats, there were none, unless the representative of a Welchman may be called a goat; but of monkeys and puppies of the biped class, particularly in that division of the stables which was entitled "The Upper House," there was a considerable number.

The tenants of the Augean Stables did not live in them always; they only came there on certain evenings from about January or February until August. The purpose for which they met was that of law-making,—but they made many more speeches than laws. The object of their legislation was professedly the greatest possible happiness of the public at large, but it was really the greatest possible happiness of the individual legislators. When, in early times, they made laws with ropes about their necks, they enacted whatever pleased the tyrant for the time being—thus judiciously saving their own bacon: and latterly, when they began to be subject to "pressure from without," they consulted the public good just as far as

they were obliged, and no further; allowing justice and benevolence to be squeezed out of them by instalments, to an amount exactly proportioned to that pressure.

They were divided into two principal classes, who differed theoretically about matters of government, but were cordially united on the principle of taking care of themselves. There was a third and small party whose aim was to promote the national welfare, but those who composed it were scouted.

It will now be seen that the legislation in the Augean Stables was very dirty work; and, the place not having been cleaned out since its foundation several centuries back, (though an abortive attempt with that view was made in 1830,) that the accumulation of filth there must have been prodigious. This chiefly consisted of foul and sordid Acts, which, therefore, instead of being wholesome and salutary, as such Acts ought to have been, were grievously the reverse, to the infinite scandal and offence of all rightly constituted noses.

The other places which were likewise denominated Augean Stables, were also in a very disgraceful state. The various Courts were defiled with injustice: and one in particular, yclept the Court of Chancery, was so overladen with rascality that it was called in bitter irony the Court of Equity. Of the Offices, those termed Police Offices were full of partiality and oppression, and those which belonged to the Government, besides swarming with a sort of locusts, caterpillars, and other vermin, who preyed on the vitals of the country, were replete with fraud and humbug.

Such were the delightful dens, which Hercules, by way of parallel to his former achievement, found it his vocation to clean out. Of course it will be supposed, that as of yore he turned the river Alpheus through the stables of his Majesty Augeas, so did he divert the Thames through those of the British sovereign. It is not certain that he had not at first some idea of so doing, the principal stables being commodiously situated for this purpose, and the creatures within them as richly deserving a drenching as did the cattle and "creeping things" which did *not* go up into Noah's Ark. But there were two objections to this plan; first, that a great many of the said creatures were—if there be any truth in a certain proverb—exempt from

a watery death; and secondly, that to direct that stream through all the stables, some of which lay dispersedly, was physically impossible. But there was another stream which was capable of swamping them all, and he availed himself of it as we shall see.

This stream was the tide of Public Opinion. How to raise it, was the difficulty,—though it is easier to raise the water than to raise the wind. But heroes make no bones of difficulties, and break a great many in spite of them. And never more potent was enchanter's wand in arousing the strength of the billows, than the club of Hercules. Prospero's was a rattan to it. In faith he flourished it to some purpose; but first he therewith hoisted out of the sluggish and stagnant waters of the popular mind all those weeds of prejudice, ignorance, gullibility and selfishness, which had till then kept it a dull toad-pond. And when he had done this, it was a grand sight to see how, first swaying to and fro like an awakened ocean, it gradually rose and swelled, and heaved up its waves unto the sky. For he had stirred it up from the very bottom, whence burst and bubbled up fresh and pure springs innumerable; insomuch, that it became a vast world of waters. And now Hercules smote it with his club, as whilom Neptune, when he had a mind to brew up a storm, was wont to smite the main with his trident. Whereat, it roared and foamed terrifically, and broke with tremendous force against the black rocks of Interest, Bribery, and Corruption, which were set up to dam it out from the stables. The rocks shook and trembled to their foundations, by reason of its violence, and from behind them arose shouts of rage, and unmeaning menaces, and imprecations, and cries of alarm, amid all which a noise as of many donkeys was distinctly audible. Bit by bit, large masses of rock crumbled and fell with an astonishing sound into the gulf beneath; wherefrom a voice of great triumph, as the voice of many thunders, ascended, rending the air. Nor did the flood, it being now pure, replace with muddy depositions the havoc which it continually made. At last, it having attained to its full height and power, and the rocks having been thoroughly sapped and undermined, Hercules, standing on the shore, did, with one end of his all-potent and magnetic club, attract the huge body of waves unto himself, and then, presenting unto it the other, he repelled

and dismissed it, full flow, with irresistible momentum against its barriers, which it burst, broke down, and bore away in its overwhelming tide,—and then rushing with unchecked course through those sinks of stables, washed off at one sweep the accumulated abominations of ages.

And so Hercules cleaned out the Augean Stables.

CHAPTER VI.

LABOUR SIXTH.—HOW HERCULES DESTROYED THE HARPIES.

THE neighbourhood of the lake Stymphalis, in Arcadia, was infested by certain carnivorous birds whose quarry was the human species. They are said to have resembled cranes or storks; but the crane and stork are not anthropophagous, but fish-eaters, and partial to frogs. The adjutant, or gigantic crane, to be sure, is piscivorous in a wider sense—with it all being fish that comes to net; but it does not catch Sepoys. The Stymphalides most likely were immense vultures—if they were any thing at all. Whatever they were, it is recorded in the various Mythologies that Hercules shot them.

Now there was formerly a sort of Stymphalides in England. To what particular class to refer them would puzzle an ornithologist. Their natures and dispositions were a compound of the raven, carrion crow, vulture, kite, and buzzard; they resembled the last two creatures, especially in their generous disposition to prey upon the weak and defenceless. They had likewise so much of the heron in them, as a strong appetite for gudgeons; and as the albatross devours its fellow-creatures the gulls, even so did they. They were foul, filthy, cruel, and rapacious. Let us call them HARPIES.

It will have been divined by the reader that these Harpies belonged to the genus *Homo*. So, apparently they did; though perhaps in reality they were of the class *Diabolus*; for they were decidedly inhuman. But their resemblance to the Harpy was, in the majority of instances, not merely a moral one. By far the greater number of

them had that prominent feature of the face, the organ of smell, very like, in conformation, to the beak of the harpy. These individuals were of a certain "persuasion," though what they were persuaded of, except that the grand rule of conduct was to get money, it is not easy to conceive. Besides their nasal peculiarity, they possessed the pleasing personal advantages, of thick, pouting, and everted lips; and a lozenge-like eye, of the variety termed goggle, protruding attractively from its socket. Their countenances were radiant with a smirk of complacent baseness and self-applauding cunning. The elder of them were altogether shabby; the younger, dirty and fine. Their names were for the most part those of a certain wise king, of that king's father, and of the head of a particular priesthood; but these names they generally clipped and abbreviated, as if they were ashamed of them; although, in truth, they were not ashamed of any thing.

The rest of the Harpies had the eyes, nose, and mouth of the Christian, and some of them actually pretended to that title; going to chapel on Sundays three times a day, and while there, groaning and looking dismal, and calling themselves miserable sinners; which nobody could deny that they were.

The prey of these Harpies was twofold. One kind corresponded to that most attenuated of quadrupeds, the Church Mouse; the other to that remarkably tender bird, the Green Goose. The Church Mouse was an unfortunate wight who wanted a few pounds on an emergency; the Green Goose, a young fool with expectations, who would fain squander his fortune beforehand. Necessity placed the Mouse, Extravagance the Goose, in the power of the Harpies.

There is an amusement in which our youth often indulge, denominated the flying of kites. A species of kite-flying was also practised by the youth of our ancestors, and by others of them. There is this difference, however, between the two games; that whereas our boys must first have the wind raised before they can fly their kites, kites were flown formerly to raise the wind. Now the Church Mice and the Green Geese were the chief flyers of kites: and thus it was that they became the prey of the Harpies.

By certain means, which the Legal Hydra, pandering to the voracity of the Harpies, afforded; the latter were

enabled to despoil the Green Geese and Church Mice even unto nakedness, and plague them afterwards to boot. These means were designated by two cabalistic phrases, *FIERI FACIAS*, and *CAPIAS AD SATISFACIENDUM*: and by them were effected Execution and Imprisonment for Debt. By Execution, a debtor, with his wife and family, was reduced to destitution and beggary; by Imprisonment the poor wretch was tormented, and all who depended on him starved. Among the various social phenomena occasioned by these processes, the woman about to become a mother turned shivering into the snow; the sick child expiring on the dung-hill; the distracted father blowing his brains out—were matters of frequent occurrence.

These benevolent contrivances for the benefit of the Harpies, were maintained by the British public out of a tender regard on the part of its members for their beloved pockets, and a modest distrust of their own penetration, which led them to take every precaution against the contingency of being cheated; it never occurred to them that it would be sufficient to punish the fraudulent debtor as a rogue.

Hercules, on beholding the ravages of these miscreant Harpies, was moved to an extremity of compassion and wrath. And when he came to scan their hard, pitiless, yellow, ill-omened faces, and to look into their greedy, mean, and cruel eyes, his celestial ichor so boiled with indignant contempt and hatred, that he could have found in his heart literally to dash the whole brood of them to atoms. He reined in, however, the excess of his ire; and, leaving the individual caitiffs, with his malison, to go their own way to Erebus, took measures for exterminating the species.

Having first placarded the town with notices of his intention, he gave a lecture on the law of debtor and creditor at Exeter Hall, where he appeared on the platform in a respectable suit of black and a white neckcloth. He began by complimenting his audience on the singular freedom from hypocrisy which characterized the British nation, and on the conformity of its practice with the code which it professed to follow. The compliment was acknowledged with loud cheers. He then enumerated certain precepts of the code in question, such as those generally recommending justice and benevolence, and particularly

that which required the forgiveness of debts, and the surrender of a coat to one who took a cloak; and he demonstrated the beautiful accordance therewith of the law which he had undertaken to handle. He showed that debt, unless a swindling transaction, was a contract entered into with a risk; and, in case of its unavoidable non-fulfilment, how consistent it was with the maxim "Do unto others as you would be done by," to ruin a debtor and consign him to a dungeon. Then he drew so delightfully pathetic a picture of the workings of the law with respect not only to the prisoner, but his wife and children, that all the ladies present cried bitterly. To be sure he was interrupted occasionally by murmurs and cries of "Oh! oh!" but on the whole his discourse produced a serious impression, and the majority of his hearers looked grave and thoughtful, as if really a rather new light had begun to dawn upon their minds. He wound up his speech by a strong panegyric upon the Harpies in general, (whom, however, he did not call "Harpies," but "highly respectable men,") and upon the considerate regard of the legislature for their interests and well-being. Having concluded, he sat down in perfect silence: no one rose to reply to him, and the assembly separated looking extremely foolish.

Very shortly afterwards, a grand discovery was made by the sagacious public, namely, that punishment for debt was contrary to the spirit of their religion.

The Harpies now began to yell and scream wondrously, in great trepidation and alarm; the rather that Hercules had begun to discharge against them his inevitable and deadly arrows. The wounds which they therefrom received were so fearfully envenomed, that the wretches swelled up like bloated reptiles; and became, as it were, noisome among men. They were only seen to be execrated; their company was shunned like a pestilence, and to such a pitch had the popular animosity against them arisen, that they stood in bodily fear. And now the legislature, galled by the stray shafts of the hero, and overawed by the cry of the people for Right and Justice, at once utterly abolished the laws which maintained them in being; and their pernicious and hateful existence was happily terminated for ever.

CHAPTER VII.

LABOUR THE SEVENTH.—HOW HERCULES CAUGHT AND TAMED A PRODIGIOUS WILD BULL, WHICH RAVAGED A CERTAIN ISLAND.

HERCULES was a bull-hunter of old. It is on record that he captured a wild and very mischievous bull, which laid waste the island of Crete. The Heraclidæ, or descendants of Hercules, had they flourished at a later epoch, might have taken the name and arms of Turnbull; the Heralds' College, surely, would have had no objection to their doing so. The hero, in his deified state, did likewise catch and tame a notable bull; bull No. 2.

This bull was a bull who made himself very troublesome in an island contiguous unto Great Britain, forming, indeed, a third of the United Kingdom; and so powerful was he that he nearly turned it upside down. In fact, this island was Hibernia; so that the bull was an Irish bull. However, the reader must know that he was positively an Irish bull, in which respect he differed from certain other bulls of that nation.

This bull was a very fat bull. He had no horns, (that we know of,) so that he did not gore anybody. Still he was very dangerous. He possessed a marvellous gift of bellowing, whereby he was wont to create frequent disturbances in the island, to the perilous excitement of the turbulent part of the population, and the disquiet and alarm of the more peaceable inhabitants. Probably it was on account of this faculty of roaring that he was named the Great O; that letter energetically pronounced being imitative of a roar. The noises which he used to make were so terrible that they shook the whole island like an earthquake, to such an extent as at times to render its utter disjunction from the sister kingdom a thing to be apprehended. Hence it was that he was also denominated **AGITATOR**.

He consumed a wonderful amount of provender annually, in the shape of a material which in the language of the country was called **RHINT**. This provender he obtained by dint of his roaring, which was rather musical to the

ears of the majority of the Hibernians, who, to tell the truth, were somewhat of an obstreperous disposition; but who also expected to derive certain advantages from it, hoping that it would terrify the adjoining country into conceding to them certain rights and privileges, which, as they conceived, it had unjustly withheld from them. They therefore, though they could ill afford it, supplied him copiously with the Rhint, to encourage him to bellow and roar.

This bull had a kinsman, whose name was John Bull, who lived over the water, and to whom the hullabaloo which he kept up was extremely annoying. John particularly disapproved of the earthquakes which the Irish bull was occasioning, and looked forward to their possible consequence with much uneasiness. He roared out to him to be quiet; it was of no use. He roared to those who had the common charge of himself and the other bull, to interfere and keep him in order; they could not, they knew not what to do. So that at last he roared out for help to Hercules.

Hercules, ever inclined to act as a peacemaker, acceded readily to the roar of John Bull. The hero's intentions becoming known, it was thought by many that he would embark for Hibernia by the first steamer, and instantly proceed to reduce the animal to reason with his club. But upon consideration, he found that whatever induced the Hibernian bull to bellow, there was, as a matter of fact, no little reason in his roar; at least on the part of those who upheld him therein. For they, for the most part, had been reduced to live on potatoes and salt; a diet which he felt would, in his mortal state, have made him cry out, or get anybody he could to cry out for him by proxy. And he put it to John Bull, who was extremely sensitive in his own case to the wrongs of the stomach, and whose appetite was especially remarkable, whether starvation was not a fair excuse for roaring or causing to roar.

It was clear, therefore, to the demigod, that the proper course to pursue in order to tame down this Irish bull would be to relieve, and thereby to pacify, the famishing population of his country. And now how, he came to ask himself, was it that the Hibernians were fain to live upon the root which the swine did eat; that Irishmen were reduced to fare like Irish pigs? He saw in a moment that

it was from the depressed state of agriculture and commerce; and that this again arose in consequence of the absence from the country of those whose presence was necessary to their promotion; the capitalists and owners of the soil: and here the question naturally suggested itself:—"Was he to break their heads?"

No. It was from fear of having their heads broken that they absented themselves. The country was too hot to hold them; and now came the grand question,—how was this?

There is a certain culinary axiom, analogically applicable to legislation, namely, that "What is sauce for goose is sauce for gander." Now the sister island, conformably to its gender, being representable by gander, and Great Britain, in consideration of its political wisdom, by goose, it was apparent to the mind of Hercules, that, for goose and for gander, very different sauces were provided, and that gander naturally was highly indignant with her cooks. Hence her inflammatory condition, and consequently inconvenient temperature.

Between Hibernia and Britannia there was one especial difference. No man who likes mutton and dislikes beef, will willingly eat beef instead of mutton. Still less willingly will he allow beef to be forced down his throat; and least of all will he willingly pay for the said beef. Now there was, in the times whereof we are writing, a species of theological beef, and a species of theological mutton. In Britannia this diversity of taste was acknowledged and accommodated, insomuch that, in a particular district of the island where veal was preferred,—the other and the larger district being inhabited by beef-eaters, and beef-eating being therein the established system—the use of veal was ratified and sanctioned by law, and men were not obliged to eat beef unless they choose: still less were they obliged to pay for it whether they ate it or not. It had been at one time attempted to force beef upon them; but they *covenanted* together against it and kicked it out, and thenceforward they were allowed to eat their veal in quiet. The territory in question was called Scotia—Hibernia had a peculiar appetite for mutton; indeed she could eat nothing else, and as she was obliged to eat something, she chose that and paid for it. Be it observed, we speak of mutton theological; for of veritable mutton poor

Hibernia had little enough. But Britannia insisted on her feeding on beef, or, at all events, on paying for a supply of it. The pocket is impatient of aggression. Men do not like being taxed, whether directly or indirectly, for what they do not require. Hibernia, therefore, took the demand which was made on her of payment for the beef (which she would rather have been without) extremely ill. Nor was this all. The purveyors of the popular aliment, mutton, felt themselves exceedingly aggrieved, partly at the abstract wrong of their customers being saddled with the expense of unpalatable beef, partly because their mutton, but for that imposition, would have borne a higher price. They therefore very naturally sided with those who dealt with them, and exhorted them to clamour for "Liberty of Mutton," and "No compulsory Beef," exciting the bull also to roar to the same tune.

Hercules being acquainted with these circumstances, presented himself with his club before the Legislature of the United Kingdom of Britannia and Hibernia, and said how happy he should be to reduce the Irish bull, in accordance with the wishes of the Bull called John, to a state of harmless domesticity. But he would not budge, he declared, till the homogeneity of the sauce for the gander with the sauce for the goose was established, and especially till the exaction for the repudiated beef was abolished. His declaration was received with much grunting, hooting, and groaning; and an abortive attempt was made to convince him that the so-called gander was no gander, but quite a different bird from the goose. Those who made this assertion knew very well that it was false; and there needed only a very few blows from the hero's club to put them all to silence. But they demurred strongly to the mutton, and insisted on upholding the beef. Mutton, they contended, was unwholesome for the Hibernians. Hercules replied that they would eat nothing else. They urged that beef was the proper thing; that the benighted creatures did not know what was good for themselves. The demigod answered that beef they would not have. Then they began to panegyricize beef; but Hercules lost all patience, and knowing well that the purveyors of beef were at the bottom of all this humbug, he flew into a fit of divine wrath, and laid about him right and left, till he had drubbed common sense and rationality into the assembly, when

they at length agreed to be guided by his advice. So the sauce for the gander and the sauce for the goose were identified; the privilege of mutton was conceded to the Hibernians, and beef was left to their option.

And then Hercules went over to Hibernia prepared to take the bull by the horns, and now that he had no further business to roar, to cudgel him soundly should he prove riotous. But the supply of provender, all but an eleemosynary sufficiency, had ceased; the creature was tame as a lamb: and allowed himself to be quietly conveyed by the hero to Liverpool, and thence to London, where Hercules, to show the docility of his prize, having entwined a garland of mingled rose, shamrock, and thistle around his neck, led him thereby about the principal thoroughfares, and presented him on the first Court day to her Majesty the Queen.

CHAPTER VIII.

LABOUR THE EIGHTH.—HOW HERCULES DESTROYED CERTAIN MARES WHICH FED UPON HUMAN FLESH.

ONCE upon a time, that time being the mythological era of Greece, there lived one Diomedes, King of Bistonia in Thrace, who was celebrated for his mares; as well he might be: since the said mares, rejecting corn and beans, were accustomed to eat men. Whether this taste of theirs was innate or acquired, whether it had been engendered by Diomedes for a physiological experiment, or (for kings' ideas of jocularities were formerly often singular) for fun; or whether the animals had associated in early youth with hyenas, and had imbibed their propensities, we cannot say. Diomedes, perhaps, was a political economist, who, in order to reduce the surplus population of his territory, occasionally turned out those mares to graze among the paupers, who are more like grass than any other kind of flesh, being not only especially liable to be cut down, but also being continually trodden on. At least so it was while paupers were. No doubt the subjects of Diomedes objected to becoming pasture, and being mown as human hay; and were not a little rejoiced when Hercules under-

took to put down their sovereign's stud. In this undertaking he succeeded; he conveyed the mares away, first having regaled them on the carcass of their owner; and turned them loose on Mount Olympus, where they finally came to be eaten up themselves by the bears.

Once again upon a time, when Hercules was last on Earth, there existed monsters like the mares of Diomedes. These monsters were of the feminine gender; and they drew a certain vehicle called the Car of Fashion; we may therefore compare them to mares. Their names were Pride and Vanity; so that there was only a pair of them and not a stud; but their appetite was enormous, and their victims were without number. What was peculiar to them, however, was, that they had no notion of the kind of food which they devoured, nor suspected that it was aught but ordinary provender. This singular circumstance arose from their being totally blind, and from their nostrils being continually filled with incense, offered up by certain idolaters to Fashion, which impaired their sense of smell: also from their being naturally devoid of taste.

For an ordinary mare, fourteen hands would be a considerable height; but these mares were much higher than that; and those who rode them might have been emphatically said to ride the high horse; for a mare *is* a horse: although the converse of the proposition is untenable. They were gaily and jauntily tricked out with bows, and ribbons, and top-knots; and their chariot was as of gilt gingerbread beset with gimcracks. Fashion herself sat upon the box driving this chaise and pair; her brows crowned with a garland of tulips, surmounted with a velvet cap of divers colours, of a conical shape, set about with gems, and decorated with a peacock's feather. Her arms were adorned with costly bracelets, her fingers with rings and jewels, and her person with a vest of glistening satin, displaying all the hues of the rainbow. Her waist was as the waist of a wasp, and she had wings at her back like unto those of a butterfly. Sometimes she sat, holding the reins of her car in one hand and a mirror in the other, in which she regarded the reflection of her own countenance, (the only reflection that she had any taste for,) with an expression of admiration and rapture: sometimes she would drive standing on the point of one foot, the other being stretched out at right angles with her body,

to give the spectators an advantageous view of her graces, and show them how pretty she looked.

The prey on which Fashion fed her mares consisted of young females. She, no less than the animals, was ignorant of its quality; she unconsciously occasioned the supply of it: but even if she had known what it was, it is probable that she would not have cared a spangle about the matter; she, wonderful to relate, existing without a heart.

The young females whom Pride and Vanity devoured,—we speak not of those fair beings who were eaten up by them in another sense—were the poor dress-makers and milliners. These unfortunate creatures were forced to sacrifice to those insatiable animals their life-blood, which was worked out of them by excessive toil, in order to furnish trappings for Fashion and her car. Had they been devoured at once, their fate had been less grievous; but they were killed by inches, by tortures lingering and slow. Some ached at head and at heart to death; others were gradually smothered by consumption; others, in like manner, poisoned by close air, or worried by complicated miseries into an early grave.

Hercules, revolving in his mind the evils which infested society, took cognisance of the case of these poor young women; and being, like all true heroes, a professed champion of damsels in distress, he conceived a strong feeling of indignation against Fashion, her car, and the odious animals which drew it; and thereupon determined to upset the whole concern.

He forthwith proceeded, with his arrows and his club, to demolish this idol of Fashion: so he shot and battered away at her with all his might to reduce her from a goddess to a dummy. He knocked off the tawdry tinsel of her head-dress, till he had reduced it to show like what it really was—a mere fool's-cap. He bestowed a handsome thwack upon her head, that all might hear how hollow and empty it sounded. He drove one of his keenest darts through the place where her heart should have been, to convince the beholders, by her obvious insensibility to the wound, that she was without one. He dashed away her fallacious externals of elegance, and displayed the contrivances beneath them for screwing on this part, puffing out that, and transmogrifying the other—that every one might see what a thing of lies and nothingness

she intrinsically was. The more effectually to disparage and bring her into contempt, he also attacked her priests and ministers, the hierophants of fiddle-faddle, who spoke, and sang, and wrote paragraphs in the newspapers to her praise and glory; till at last "Fashionable Intelligence" became a theme of laughter even to scorn.

He then seized Pride and Vanity by the mane, (they had no bridle,) and, stripping them of their feathers and fineries, he bade people look and see what sorry jades they were. And having thus exhibited them in all their meanness to derision, he demanded if it was to be borne that to these vile things should be immolated youth, and health, and beauty; that they should be allowed to batten on the agonies, and tears, and wasting flesh, and blood of an innocent girl? At first his words seemed as foolishness to the delicate votareesses of Fashion, by whose means, unwittingly, the creatures had been pampered; and they only thought that the speaker was a coarse, rough person, a savage whose delight was to excruciate by his ferocious invectives the refined sensibilities of "ton;" but Hercules, by a wave of his magic club, raised before their eyes a panorama of the ghastly wretchedness of which they had been the ignorant cause; and soon, on many a flaunting cheek, the factitious rose of the paint-pot was merged in the blush of shame. He then (in the most gentleman-like manner possible) applied his magic weapon to their habiliments; when lo! there ensued a marvel. The snowy cambric became crimson; the pink satin yellow, like the cheek of sickness; and the glossy silk dull, like its faded eye. Their finely-strung nerves thrilled with horror; but when the elegant corset embraced the form which it invested with a glow like that of hectic fever, they screamed aloud with affright. Another flourish of the club annulled the transformation, and their terrors were relieved; but conviction had been wrought in their minds, and they tremblingly resigned Pride and Vanity into the hands of Hercules, to be dealt with according to his pleasure.

In consequence of the renunciation of Pride and Vanity, a considerable impairment took place of the splendour of "Drawing-rooms," "Soirées," the boxes of the Italian Opera, and Regent-street of a summer's afternoon. The remaining partisans of fiddle-faddle sighed bitterly over this altered state of things, and lamented with much pathos

the departed glories wherein they had lived, and moved, and had their being. But to most eyes, Beauty gained more in its adornments of Goodness and Mercy, than it lost in the matter of silk and satin.

It will be inquired, what did Hercules do with Pride and Vanity? Some say that he turned them loose in Paris where they were, after a long time, annihilated by Common Sense. But the more prevailing opinion is, that he sacrificed them to Jupiter.

CHAPTER IX.

THE NINTH LABOUR.—HOW HERCULES OBTAINED A GIR-
DLE WHICH APPERTAINED TO ROYALTY.

HIPPOLYTA, Queen of the Amazons, and afterwards (according to Shakspeare) Duchess of Athens, had a girdle, which was called the girdle of Mars. Hippolyta and her subjects were military and masculine ladies: this girdle, therefore, was probably like a soldier's belt; and her Majesty when she wore it must have looked very much like Mr. Liston as "Moll Flagon." The ninth labour imposed upon Hercules by Eurystheus, was to get possession of this accoutrement for his daughter Admeta: a service of danger; for every individual of the Amazons was a regular Joan of Arc, or Maid of Saragossa; and they were regarded as the Invincibles of their day. However, Hercules got the girdle.

There was also a certain girdle with which the Sovereign of England, whether king or queen, was invested as the Head of the Executive. For a royal cincture it was a very unpretending looking thing. It was no silk or satin sash, embroidered, studded with gems, and fastened with a gold buckle. No. It was just such a girdle as a friar might have worn; in fact it was made of hemp. And it is proper to state, that the monarch only wore it in theory; for whatever difference of opinion may have existed as to its utility, no one would have regarded it as ornamental. Strange to say, however, it was actually worn occasionally by the subject, though never more than once by the same

individual; and it then served not for a girdle, but for a necklace.

This girdle, also, may be said to have been the girdle of Mars, for Mars was the god of hangmen. In a word, it was—the HALTER.

Hercules, who looked at the world and events with the eye of the mind, went one day to the Court of Buckingham Palace. Around him were rank, splendour, and beauty. Uniforms, orders, stars, crosses, feathers, were glowing, glittering, waving about on every side. Eyes, brighter than the diamonds which encircled the brows above them, were radiating in all directions. Perfumes loaded the air. On her throne, pre-eminent over this scene of magnificence, sat the young and lovely Queen of England. She wore, to ordinary eyes, what seemed to be merely the Order of the Garter; but to those of Hercules, it was accompanied by that of the Halter, which he thought exceedingly ugly. He knew that it had not been put on by her own royal hands, nor by the delicate fingers of the ladies of the bed-chamber; that Her Gracious Majesty was not aware that she was wearing it, and that if she were so, she would be exceedingly glad to get rid of it. He therefore resolved to divest her fair form of this unbecoming decoration.

The Halter was a trapping with which Royalty had been embellished by Law. It was a contrivance for the protection of life and property; but not having been found practically to accomplish the latter object, it had been, after a long series of unsuccessful experiments, abandoned as far as that was concerned, and was now no longer employed to deter a famishing wretch from purloining a few shillings, or feloniously walking off with a lamb. It was still resorted to, however, as a preventive against murder, on that truly homœopathic principle, "Similia similibus curantur;" whereon "one fire burns out another's burning." But Legislation and Quackery were closely akin in those days.

All that Hercules had to do, was to procure the repeal of the enactments which maintained the Halter. But this was no easy matter. The Halter had many friends and supporters who considered it essential to the existence of society. Some of them venerated it as an ancient and time honoured appendage to the glorious constitution;

and not a few regarded it with interest as a property appertaining to the tragic drama of life, the decline of which, they, in their hearts, would have been sorry to behold. So the hero, in the accomplishment of this labour, encountered much opposition.

Among the articles of the popular creed, was one which inculcated the duty of returning good for evil, and which distinctly repudiated the maxim of "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." Hercules demanded what difference there was between morality for the mass, and morality for the individual? The answer which he received was, "A good deal;" and no other, with the hardest blows of his club, could he hammer out of the respondents. Instead of replying to his questions, they assailed him with abuse; calling him a profane person, a subverter of the established order of things, a mawkish sentimentalist, and other names. "Well done, my fine fellows," cried Hercules, "rally around the Hälter." Whereat, they howled and yelled, and hooted at him the louder.

Then Hercules changed his tone, and affecting to be convinced that he had been in error, began to sing the praises of hemp, which he asserted to constitute the cord which held the community together, but for which mankind would instantly set about cutting each other's throats. "Talk of the bond of Charity!" he would exclaim; "pooh! the noose—the noose is the thing!" But neither would people admit of this doctrine, and they indignantly asked what business had he or anybody to use such language as that? They were not beasts of prey, they said, lions, tigers, hyænas, but men—Christians. "Then you are not," said the demigod, "deterred from doing murder by fear of the gallows?" They replied, "Certainly not." But, they contended, the ignorant and the stupid and the brutal were.

Hercules hereupon disguised himself as a recruiting sergeant, and taking a drum before him, and getting a fifer to precede him, he strutted forth playing the Grenadier's March. In a moment he had a score or two of ragamuffins at his heels, all ready to list. "Death or Victory!" cried Hercules. "Hurrah!" shouted the rabble. "Thirteen pence a day, my lads, safe!" he exclaimed. Again they cheered. "Who cares for the chance of a bullet!" "Not

we! We should think not! Bullets! Ho, ho!" roared the populace with scorn. "Get along with you, you vagabonds," said the hero, dispersing them with his club. "So much, gentlemen, for the fear of death."

But John Bull was a strong-minded fellow. He was not to be laughed out of his convictions—not he! Hercules, however, resolved to persevere. Accordingly he gave a grand banquet, whereunto he invited the Ministers, several of the Judges, a Bishop or two, a large number of ladies of title, and all the most distinguished personages in the world of Fashion, of Science, and Literature. A hero was always able to command good society—particularly if he gave good dinners; so they were very glad to come. Dinner being ended, and the cloth removed, Hercules rose, and requested his distinguished guests to allow him to call their attention to a toast which he was about to propose—the health of a gentleman present, to whom, he had no doubt, they would feel extremely happy to do that honour: a gentleman whose important services to the state, (he hoped no one present would ever require them,) performed under the most trying circumstances, entitled him to public gratitude, and particularly to the thanks of all those who were concerned in the administration of Justice. He had that gentleman now in his eye.

Here the looks of the illustrious assembly were all directed to the quarter indicated by Hercules, where, next to a young and beautiful countess, sat a short, squat, burly man with a flat head, coarse features, and sunken eyes, who had been till now unnoticed by any one; or, if he had, had passed for some stupid nobleman.

"I beg," continued the illustrious demigod, "to propose the health of JACK KETCH."

A scene of the utmost confusion instantly ensued. The young countess screamed and fell down in a fainting fit. A universal exclamation of horror and disgust broke forth, and an expression of indignation and loathing sat on every countenance. The ladies turned pale; the noble lords looked ferocious; the Judges frowned, and the meek eyes of the Bishops flashed fire. Hercules, with well-feigned astonishment, protested that he did not know what was the matter.

A noble Duke there present, begged respectfully to ask the distinguished demigod whether he considered such

conduct on his part fit and proper, and hospitable treatment of his right honourable, and reverend, and illustrious guests?

"Such conduct as what?" answered Hercules.

"Nay, really," said his Grace, "I must beg your Mightiness's pardon; but look at that person." And he pointed to Jack Ketch, who returned the compliment with an ominous leer.

"Well!" replied the hero, "is he not a man and a brother? Have you not enacted that if no hangman can be found, the sheriff is to perform his part? Why may not Jack Ketch be a respectable man?"

"I do not," said the Duke, "object to his station in life, being quite aware that to a divine understanding, such as that of your Mightiness, all men are equal: but to ask us to dine with the common hangman!"

"The common hangman!" said Hercules. "What then? Has the accessory any right to be ashamed of his principal? You, all and each of you, who uphold Jack Ketch, are his accomplices. The fairest lady among you who would continue him in his office, lends a hand to tighten the noose which throttles a fellow-creature."

"A—h!" screamed all the ladies in unison.

"And now is it not too bad of you," continued Hercules, "to impose a participation in this man's deeds upon your very Sovereign,—to force the Royal hand, by its signature, to the death-warrant, to become the *primum mobile* in the work of butchery?"

They had nothing to say in reply.

"Get out," said Hercules to Jack Ketch; "we have now had enough of your company. Well, good people, what say you? Will you consent to relieve Royalty of this elegant, this Christian ornament, the hempen girdle, and to resign it into my custody?"

They now saw the force of the arguments of Hercules; and shortly afterwards an Act of Parliament was passed for dispensing in future with the services of Jack Ketch, and for the everlasting disuse of the Halter, which the Head of the Executive gladly resigned into the hands of Hercules, who formally made a present of it to *Punch*, to perpetuate, in the execution of Jack Ketch, the memory of his triumph over legal homicide.

CHAPTER X.

LABOUR THE TENTH.—HOW HERCULES DESTROYED THE MONSTER MAMMON AND HIS WHOLE HERD.

It has been said that Christianity overthrew the worship of demons. It was some time in doing so, however; for, to say nothing of the devil Moloch, or War, whose destruction by Hercules we have already commemorated, the devil Mammon, so late as the middle of the nineteenth century, was adored throughout the world, but especially in Great Britain.

To Mammon, as well as to Moloch, were sacrificed human victims; and the larger share of them, perhaps, was immolated to the former fiend. They were deprived of life, not by the summary processes of throat-cutting, shooting, and stabbing, amid fire and smoke, and the thunder of cannon, and the roll of drums, and the braying of trumpets, but by the slow and silent operation of disease, wretchedness, and hunger. Thus, though Moloch, of the two devils, could boast of the finer festivals, the more exquisite banquet of agony was spread for Mammon.

Demons were fond of inhabiting the human body. Mammon was frequently to be seen incarnate; and he assumed various forms. Sometimes he appeared in the shape of a lean withered old man, but more generally in that of a round bloated monster, with a big belly. His cheeks were fat; his chin pendulous; and pimples of carbuncular appearance garnished the end of his nose. His eyes were dull and leaden, and the line of his mouth was that of a smile reversed; so that he had a peculiarly forbidding look. He most commonly wore an ample blue coat with brazen buttons, a waistcoat of black or buff, with a white neckcloth and shirt frill, and loosely-made trousers of drab, together with gaiters of the same. Oftentimes was his hair powdered; and not unfrequently was he to be seen with a pair of pocket spectacles depending from his neck by a black ribbon. He seemed, as it were somewhat knock-kneed; and he usually carried his hands in his breeches pockets. Beast as he looked, and devil as he was, people were very civil to him wherever he went,

for he did not show his tail; his square-toed shoes concealed his hoof; and he bore the semblance of a respectable man.

Mammon had a herd of slaves, who mostly looked very much like himself. They did him service as priests, selling him their own souls, and providing his altar with daily victims, of whose necessity they took advantage to work them to death. Various were the scenes of this butchery; but the principal of them were the loom and the mine, which latter was very appropriate, demons being subterranean in their habits. Often in mephitic vapour, or the Tartarean atmosphere of a fire-damp, would the foul fiend hover over his victims in the crannies of the coal pit, and regale his malignant eyes with their pale, wan looks, their haggard features, and distorted limbs, and his fell ears with their groans, and sighs, and struggling breath. Often, also, in the close, crowded, and unwholesome factory would he revel in a like treat; further gratified, in either situation, by the swearing, cursing, ill words, filth, ruffianism, and profligacy, engendered by the circumstances of their lot, among the wretches on whose blood he battered.

Another of his favourite haunts was the workhouse, where he glutted himself on the deathbed of the unfriended pauper, worn out by the oppression of his murderous ministers, and on the surrounding fatuity, despair, and anguish of heart, entailed by unpitying Avarice upon the poor. Or he would betake himself to the jail, and there exult in the tears of the captives, lost to themselves and to the world for ever through crime, to which penury, the infliction of their taskmasters, had goaded them.

Mammon, furthermore, played into the hands of Moloch; hunger for gold was accompanied with thirst for blood. He stirred up the nations to war, and his crowning triumph was the slaughter of the unhappy Chinese for the price of poison.

Perjury, swindling, iniquitous monopoly, and tyrannous legislation, were also among the works of Mammon. For him the politician turned his coat; for him was the heart of Beauty self-bartered, or crushed by a compulsory sale to the dotard or the villain. At his bidding did the preachers of a religion which bade the forgiveness of debts, distraint for tithes. Gambling, with its deadly fruit of madness and suicide, was an Upas of his growing.

The manifold murders of this fiend Mammon and his herd considered, he may be well said to have resembled the monster Geryon, the son of Chrysaor or *Gold-sword*, king of Erytheia, whose oxen devoured human flesh. The herd, too, of Mammon, were like unto oxen, seeing that they were, for the most part, very fat, and also extremely stupid. And of aught noble, or refined, or beautiful; of patriotism, virtue; of poetry, music, or the arts—they had about as much an idea as the ox. Indeed, they bore an instinctive aversion to all persons who were eminent in those respects; and were never more happy than to see an enthusiast or a man of genius, at whom they were very fond of sneering, in distress. A crowned king, who was one of them, said, (he could not talk English,) "Iv beebles will be poets, they moost sdarve."

The tenth labour of Hercules was to destroy Mammon, as he had formerly served Geryon, whom the monster resembled.

He effected this business by a process which probably would never have been divined had the wisest heads in the United Kingdom been laid together for that purpose.

There was a body of men who were principally distinguished by wearing black clothes and white neckcloths. It was their business to instruct the people in certain mysteries, and also in certain matters of conduct. Their doctrine formed a system which was said to be established in the land, and which everybody, particularly the gentlemen in black, professed to believe and to be guided by. People made this profession, no doubt, with great sincerity; but they were slightly mistaken. The truth was, that they disbelieved, for the most part, in the whole matter, and, what was very singular, without knowing it. For when Hercules charged them with incredulity, they were very angry; and asked him what he meant, and how he durst accuse a whole nation, with so many respectable persons in it, of downright hypocrisy? Did he not know where they went on Sundays? "I do," said Hercules; "I see your carriages at the doors."

They did not like this answer at all, and would have called Hercules, as they had done others who had talked similarly to them before, various hard names; but they stood in awe of his club. Then the hero went on to ask them whether one of the maxims which they acknowledged,

was not that "the love of money is the root of all evil?" "Certainly," they said; they believed it, and were ready to swear it. "I think," said Hercules, "you had better swear not at all:" at which remark they appeared not a little confounded. "Come, then," proceeded Hercules, "I will not ask you to sell all your effects, and give the proceeds to the starving weavers; but suppose, now, that you devote a tithe of your possessions, each of you, to the poor?"

They demurred unanimously to this proposal; and when Hercules politely pressed them to allow him to ease them of this guilty burden of gold, they saw neither the reasonableness nor the joke of what he said. They could not, however, help their eyes being slightly opened to their inconsistency; whereon the hero left them to meditate at their leisure.

In the mean time, he addressed himself to the sable gentlemen, among whom he shot a few of his sharpest arrows, which they all cried out against as arrows of persecution. The arrows were aimed with great precision at that part of the encephalon denominated the organ of conscientiousness; which they stung into such activity, that the gentlemen at length began seriously to practise what they preached. The consequence was, (such is the force of example,) that, after a while, the nation came round to their way of thinking; and that, one thousand and odd years after its introduction into Britain, CHRISTIANITY became the English creed; the worship of Mammon was abolished, his herd scattered and destroyed, and himself sent unto his own place.

CHAPTER XI.

LABOUR THE ELEVENTH.—HOW HERCULES OBTAINED THE GOLDEN FRUIT FROM THE HESPERIDES.

THE word, "Hesperides," means Western Maids. The Hesperides of classical antiquity were in possession of a certain little freehold, which was called their garden. Where it was situate is a point on which the learned differ. Apollodorus places it in the country of the Hyperboreans; that is to say, in the region beyond the north; whereby he proves himself a very poetically-minded person, by quietly giving to airy nothing a local habitation and a name. For we take it, that, beyond the North Pole, the John o'Groats' House of this terraqueous globe, there is nothing to be found but atmosphere. And the North Pole itself, there is every reason to believe, is all *nix*; which may be interpreted "all snow," or "nothing at all;" according to the Cockney or classical predilections of our readers. Hesiod transports the Hesperides beyond the seas, but he does not say for how long, nor to what place. Their residence, according to the more prevalent opinion, was near Mount Atlas, in Africa. They were said to be the children of Night; very probably because they were dark, as, on the supposition that they were Moorish maids, no doubt they would have been.

In one of those poetical gems whose coruscations illumine the infant mind, a question is put to a young lady of the name of Mary, as to the nature of her horticultural produce. Had the reply been that it principally consisted of golden pippins, the only bump in the inquirer's head that would have been called into action, would have been that of "Alimentiveness." But had it also been that those pippins were really and *bonâ fide* apples of gold, the answer would have rather appealed to "Marvellousness;" and in case it had not been voted a great lie, would have aroused "Acquisitiveness" also. Eurystheus, it would seem, must have acted under these organs, for the eleventh task which he imposed upon Hercules was, to rob the orchard of the Hesperides. The place (steel traps and spring guns had not as yet been invented) was guarded

by a terrible dragon, to which Hercules proved himself a St. George. He slew the monster and stole the apples. Another account states that he got Atlas (of that ilk) to commit the theft, and did him afterwards out of the booty. But since, in the same narration, it is averred, that, while Atlas was doing the larceny, Hercules supported the heavens for him on his shoulders, this story must be regarded as being, in every sense of the phrase, an instance of what is called in the vernacular "coming it strong."

The English Hesperides included other western people besides western maids. They mostly resided in a part of the west which was commonly called the West End. They were known by various denominations, whereof the principal were the "exclusive circles," and the "*élite of ton.*" Their Gardens were chiefly "Spring Gardens" and "May Fair;" but they had also other Gardens of broad acres in many a district of fair England. The fruit of these Gardens was golden; that is, it was the fruit of gold. Some of it was good to eat, and very good; consisting, indeed, of fish, flesh, and fowl of the best; a good deal of it, too, was drinkable, true "*aurum potabile,*" in the species of wines and liqueurs, which, could the ancients have tasted them, would have made them think decidedly small beer of Falernian. In short, it included all the luxuries and comforts of this life, in as far as they were procurable by money.

The exclusiveness of these Gardens was maintained by a variety of ingenious devices, and was practically enforced, not by a dragon, but by a degraded sort of human-creatures, who bore externally a great resemblance to the monkey race, and were fantastically arrayed in garments of divers colours; red, and yellow, and green, and blue. Their attire displayed a great profusion of gold and silver hat-bands, buttons, buckles, shoulder knots, and other decorations of the badge class, seemingly intended as marks of ignominy, which appearance was strengthened by the circumstance that their heads were besmeared with a mixture of an unctuous substance, called pomatum, with a white dust or powder. It was much in this way that a man was wont to disfigure his person when he played the fool or Merry-Andrew on the stage. However, these fellows were absolutely proud of their shame; and they were constantly to be seen, the very picture of vanity.

and conceit, standing at the portals of the "exclusive circles," to prevent the entrance of all those who were not, in the language of the persons so called, who thought it finer than English, of the "*gens comme il faut*."

To obtain the golden fruit of the Hesperides, for the benefit of the public in general, was the endeavour and the work of Hercules. He was wont to repair, of a fine afternoon in June and July, to a place of public resort, nigh unto the region of that people, which was denominated (without any allusion, as some fable, to apples) Rotten Row. There would he contemplate the Hesperides, displaying the fruit, and arrayed in the flowers of their Gardens, to the great irrigation of the mouth, and excitement of the envy of Penury and Want, who, regarding the raree-show with eager eyes, cursed their own ill destiny, and coveted their neighbours' goods.

Now Hercules did not approve of this infringement of the decalogue, but he allowed that much indulgence was to be granted to a hungry belly and tattered back. He considered, also, that a rather more general distribution of the Hesperidian fruit, if it could be peaceably effected, would be desirable. For he could not but see that there was a superfluity of it in the hands of its possessors, which, as though not knowing what to do with it, they, as it were, threw away to the dogs, and principally to an alien pack of hounds, whose only recommendation was that their yelping was musical unto their ears.

Our hero had a discerning eye and a taste for beauty; and he could not but gaze with much admiration on the fineness of form, grace of manner, and happy placidity of countenance, which the feeding on their golden fruit had, for the most part, conferred on the Hesperides. - Nor did he not regale his sight by contemplating the flowery luxuriance wherewith their persons were decorated. But he considered that, had he still been a mortal, and had he not known of a world where the souls of the heroes repose among the happy immortals, in proportion as his spirit would have been elated, and his hopes encouraged by the sight of human nature in its brightest guise, so would his aspirations have been checked, and his heart chilled by the contemplation thereof, shrouded in the rags, and defaced by the squalor, and coarseness, and degradation, of Poverty. He felt, that, as the high-born, lofty-aired, gen-

tle-seeming maiden, would have appeared but a little lower than the angels, even so would the she-savage of St. Giles's have seemed but dubiously above the brute. He reflected that the costermonger and the cabman would have well nigh put him from his faith in humanity—ay, and in divinity, too; that he would have been tempted to question if man, capable of such abasement, could possibly have a soul to be saved. He wished, therefore, to communicate in some measure to ordinary mortals the advantages enjoyed by the fortunate Hesperides.

Some say that he commenced his labour to this end, by sending Apollo and the Graces abroad among the people to cultivate and tutor their minds and to inspire them with a longing after the Hesperidian fruit. But the truth is, that he stalked forth himself in the character of the Schoolmaster, diffusing knowledge and refinement, and taste, throughout the land, and using his club as a rod wherewith to chastise ignorance, and rudeness and vulgarity. Hereby he annihilated several sorts and conditions of men really deserving the title of the "lower classes" by reason of their brutishness and folly.

And now men's eyes began to be opened. Rank and title, by their very possessors, were regarded as humbug; and respect was entertained only for real worth. A general appetite for the Hesperidian fruit had been created; and all that now remained to be done, was to procure a due distribution of it throughout society. Hercules might have broken into the Gardens at once, and with the strong hand have stolen, taken, and carried away the golden fruit; but he did no such thing. He merely procured for their owners the liberty to sell them, or to bequeath them to whomsoever they pleased—a boon which they themselves thankfully accepted at the hands of the legislature, their attempts still to maintain their supremacy over the ascending many having plunged them deeply in debt. Thus were their Gardens with the fruit of them gradually portioned out among the nation.

In a short time the village-dance beneath the hawthorn was as graceful, if not so showy, as an Almack's ball; the Benefit Club as gentleman-like an affair as the Travellers' or the Carlton. The English language was everywhere spoken and pronounced in its purity. Business was transacted over the counter with as much propriety of

manner as at the Home Office. The milliner took tea with the Duchess; the Earl walked arm-in-arm with his tailor. Every one respected, and nobody cringed to his fellow; and the maxim "Honour all men" was at length universally observed.

CHAPTER XII.

LABOUR THE TWELFTH.—HOW HERCULES TRIUMPHED OVER THE ENGLISH PLUTO AND CERBERUS—HIS LAST GREAT WORK.

BETWEEN the son of Jupiter and Alcmena, and the hero who presides over these pages, there is in certain particulars a very strong resemblance. *Punch*, like Hercules, settles every thing with his club; and if he does not destroy reptiles and beasts of prey, he knocks bailiffs, constables, churchwardens, and other monsters of that class, daily on the head. *Punch*, moreover, triumphs over Jack Ketch, as also did Hercules; and his concluding achievement is a victory over the enemy of man. How far in this respect he and Hercules are analogous, the reader will learn ere he is ten minutes older.

There was once a Tartarus in England. A Tartarus it truly was; although in one very material particular it differed from the place where the lawyers are. It was not the habitation of Dives, but of Lazarus. It was the place of punishment for the Poor.

The place of punishment for the Poor! Why, cries the reader, what a set of heartless, cruel, impious miscreants our forefathers must have been! Whether they were or not, such a place had they established in the land; and the name thereof was "THE UNION WORKHOUSE."

How, it will be asked, came this great national crime to be perpetrated in the face of Heaven? There had sprung up in England a sect of wiseacres who were called Political Economists. Economist is often used as a mild synonyme for miser; and these persons were in fact Political Misers. The great question with them was how to maintain the poor at the least possible expense. Not to keep them at all would

have been the plan most to their taste; but experience had proved that people, when starving to death, are apt to become unruly—to demolish houses, burn hay-ricks, cut throats, and do other mischief; and the Political Economists had a high regard for their own goods and carcasses. To legalize the murder of the unfortunate paupers may be supposed to have been a measure which naturally occurred to their minds; but it would have been difficult to draw the line exactly between rich and poor, and to fix the property qualification at which life should be entitled to protection. For this reason, probably, this scheme was never put into practice; but so far was it approximated to, that every possible temptation was held out to the needy mother to destroy her offspring, which, if she did, the act was followed by this useful consequence, that she herself was hanged; the population thus being reduced by two. The discouragement of vaccination amongst the inferior classes would also perhaps have been tried by these humane system-mongers; but the disease is no respecter of persons. There was no help but to keep body and soul together; and barely to do this and no more was the principle of Political Economy. But further, it was an object of that science to prevent poverty; to deter people from getting poor; for its professors quietly assumed that a man's indigence was owing to his own fault. The corollary of this proposition was, that nobody had any business to be born necessitous, or weak in mind and body, or to fall sick, or break his leg, or lose his eye-sight, or labour under any natural disadvantage, or meet with any accident which might hinder him from getting his bread; that all such things, which the ignorance of mankind had before regarded as misfortunes, were crimes and vices, deliberately committed by an abuse of free-will. This dogma would, in these millennial times, undoubtedly qualify its propounder for Bedlam; but our ancestors had a great many notions, and did a great many things, which we should now attribute to insanity. It is difficult, when we look at an old picture of a State Procession or a Lord Mayor's Show, not to conclude that the actors in such exhibitions were not deranged. This, however, is a wide digression; for your turtle-eaters and beef-eaters were any thing but german to the workhouse.

In order to effect the very benevolent object of prevent-

ing poverty, the Political Economists hatched a certain enactment, which was called the New Poor Law. The Old Poor Law (we do not mean the Statute Law, but a law much older than that—a law then upwards of eighteen hundred years' standing) bade, that if one's brother man were hungry, he should feed him, and if thirsty, that he should give him drink, and the food and drink were to be what he would cater for himself; his self-love being the measure of that which he was to bear to his neighbour. Water-gruel, therefore, for instance, was not exactly the sort of aliment which Christian charity would have prescribed to want; it entered not into the dietary of the *Old* Poor Law; but it was a staple article in that of the *New*: moreover it was very strong of the water. The remainder of the bill of fare was of nearly similar quality, the whole of it constituting a "coarser kind of food" than that used by human beings in general. For the Political Economists very sagaciously divined that rather than be reduced to live on the "coarser kind of food," a man would strain every nerve; they also wisely perceived that the said food had the recommendation of being cheap as well as nasty.

But this was not all. The board provided by the Samaritans of the New Poor Law for the distressed was admirably matched by the lodging. The Union Workhouse was made to look externally as much like a jail as possible, and its interior arrangements were just such as were calculated for the accommodation of the rogue. It had dungeons for turbulent maturity, and whips for obstreperous youth. Thus it was very judiciously rendered just the sort of place that nobody who had the least notion of comfort would choose to live in. Its incommodiousness was enhanced, too, by several very ingenious expedients. For example, was any wretched inmate detected indulging in the solace of a morsel of tobacco, he was instantly deprived of the luxury; nor was the benevolence of the friendly visitor permitted to sweeten the cup of Misery with a lump of sugar. But the masterpiece of cleverness in the workhouse system was the separation of husband from wife; for nothing would have tended more to lighten their affliction than mutual sympathy—and this would have been any thing but desirable. And the bitter tears, perchance, of an aged, fond couple, now

for the first time separated since the days of their youth, were a highly instructive example to the beholder.

It must be added, that the persons confined—for confined they were—in the workhouse, were obliged to have their heads cropped, and to wear a dress of shame, for the more forcible impression of others with the dread of coming to their condition.

Such was the English Tartarus. Its Pluto was the minister who presided over it for the time being; and its Cerberus, the triple-headed monster in which was vested the Poor Law Commission. Nor must we omit to mention a great fat, ill-favoured, surly-looking, red-nosed whelp, his offspring; namely, the Beadle.

As Hercules of old dragged Cerberus from his den, so did he, by main force, drag the Cerberus of England, in spite of his barking and biting, into the light of day. He revealed the secrets of the prison-house; he thundered them into the ears of the nation; nor did he relax his exertions till his shout, "Down with the inhuman Poor Law!" was re-echoed from John o'Groat's House to the Land's End. The cruel enactment was repealed; mercy was at length shown to the naked and hungry; and from that instant, to the shame and confusion of the Political Economists, the nation began to prosper. The gift to the poor proved to be a profitable loan.

Hercules had now performed his second set of Twelve Labours; but he determined to do a baker's dozen. His last achievement was—

LABOUR THE THIRTEENTH,

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